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THE »BAPTISED NATION« – THE INALIENABILITY OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE CULTURE OF THE POLISH NATION

REFLECTIONS BASED ON THE TEACHING OF CARDINAL STEFAN WYSZYŃSKI

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Summary

The nation is a cultural community and it is the culture that decides how the life of the community is shaped. Christianity constitutes an essential element of the Polish national culture. In his teaching Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, who was the head of the Church in Poland during the atheist system of communism, emphasised the presence of Christianity in the history of the Polish nation. He believed that the past imbued with the presence of the Church and Christianity should be presented to young people to give them the sense of continuity and an anchor which would make them aware of their past and capable of looking into the future. Cardinal Wyszyński frequently used the expression the »baptised nation«, underlying the significant role of the baptism in the history of the Polish nation. With its spiritual values religion permeated the efforts of people in the social, cultural, political, and economic sphere. In the difficult moments of Polish history the baptism and other sacraments as well as the Gospel of Christ constituted important elements of the continuity of the nation. During the period of partitions in Poland Church structures replaced the non-existent state institutions. Nowadays the Church also inspires the life of community with the light of the Gospel serving mostly the protection and promotion of the dignity of the human person. Thus, Christianity constitutes an essential element of Polish culture.

Keywords: nation, baptism, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, culture, Christianity.

Introduction

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński is known as the Primate of the Millennium. He carried out the celebrations of Poland's Millennium of Christianity – the thousandth anniversary of the baptism of Poland. It might be said that the Primate was a shepherd of the Millennium and the unquestionable leader of the Church in Poland during extremely difficult years of communist dictatorship. He was very consistent in emphasising the Christian identity of the Polish nation and its links with the Church. He contrasted the ideology of materialism, atheism and enslavement with the Christian teaching on the transcendental dignity of every human person and a call to responsible freedom. He also reminded the faithful of the historical fact of the baptism of Poland and taught about the connection between the Polish culture and Christianity. For him, the Polish national culture was simply a Christian culture.

The aim of the article is to emphasise this inextricable link present in the teaching of Cardinal Wyszyński. Apart from that, the article discusses the presentation of the nation as a cultural community, the presence of Christianity in the history of the nation, a historical fact of the baptism which bears significance for the contemporary life of the community, and finally the demonstration of the living presence of the Church and Christianity in modern life of the nation. These themes show Christianity as an important element within the Polish culture.

1. The Nation as a Cultural Community

The aim of this outline is to present the inalienability of Christianity in the culture of the Polish nation. My further reflections will be based on the teaching of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński. Cardinal Wyszyński emphasised the cultural dimension of national community in the formation of a decidedly cultural character.¹ Culture is an emanation of creative powers of the nation. It constitutes a certain sphere of values, norms, and patterns of behaviour in which all its members are submerged. Thus, it is the foundation of a social contact. Culture itself is, in a way, a form of communication, whereas the nation is

¹ Cf. Wiesław ŁUŻYŃSKI, *Struktury pośrednie pomiędzy jednostką ludzką a państwem w nauczaniu społecznym Kościoła*, Toruń, 2008, 396; Józef CHAŁASIŃSKI, *Kultura i naród*, Warszawa, 1968, 48; Antonina KŁOSKOWSKA, *Kultura narodowa*, in: Antonina KŁOSKOWSKA (ed.), *Encyklopedia kultury polskiej XX wieku*, Wrocław, 1991, 51; Józef TISCHNER, *Naród i jego prawa*, in: *Znak*, (1997) 4, 31; Czesław BARTNIK, *Wizja narodu według Jana Pawła II*, in: *Chrześcijanin w świecie*, (1983) 121, 5.

somehow the »community of communication.« Thus, the culture constitutes the basis for national unity and solidarity. It shapes national identity and integrates the members of the nation by creating a platform for social communication and, thus, becoming a constitutive element of the national community.² John Paul II had a similar understanding of the concept of community. In his address to UNESCO in 1980 he said that »the nation exists 'through' culture and 'for' culture«³ and, afterwards, he referred to the example of his own nation emphasising that culture was decisive for the survival of the Polish nation, which was condemned to death several times by its neighbours.⁴ The Pope's reflection is clearly associated with the historical experience of Poles and other nations of the Central and Eastern Europe. On the basis of the well-known distinction of Friedrich Maineke between *Kulturnation* and *Staatsnation* it should be noted that the cultural nation is typical for this part of Europe.⁵ It was culture that decided about the fact that some nations survived the long periods of being deprived of their statehood. Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński taught in a similar vein stressing a cultural character of the nation and Christianity which shaped the cultural identity of Polish people.⁶

2. Christianity as an Important Element of National Culture

After these introductory distinctions I will now focus on the teaching of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński and present crucial motifs in his reflection on the theme of the Polish nation and the presence of Christian values in its culture. Firstly, the presence of Christianity in the history of the nation will be discussed. Secondly, the baptism and millennial celebrations and, finally, the question of the living presence of the Church and Christianity in contemporary life of Polish people.

² Cf. Wiesław ŁUŻYŃSKI, *Struktury pośrednie pomiędzy jednostką ludzką a państwem w nauczaniu społecznym Kościoła*, 396–397; Janusz SZULIST, *Człowiek jest drogą Kościoła* (RH 14). *Wprowadzenie do katolickiej nauki społecznej*, Pelplin, 2012, 143.

³ JOHN PAUL II, Address to UNESCO on 2nd June 1980, in: *Dokumenty Nauki Społecznej Kościoła* (Documents of Catholic Social Teaching), II, Rome – Lublin, 1996, 144.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁵ Cf. Zbigniew BOKSZAŃSKI, *Tożsamości zbiorowe*, Warszawa, 2005, 112.

⁶ Cf. Józef CELEJ, *Kultura chrześcijańska duszą narodu w nauczaniu Prymasa Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, Warszawa, 1995, 166–167; Maciej PŁAŻYŃSKI, *Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński. Prymas Tysiąclecia – Mąż Stanu. 1901–1981–2001* (conference presentation), in: *Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński Prymas Tysiąclecia – Mąż Stanu*, Warszawa, 2001, 11.

2.1. *The Presence of Christianity in the History of the Nation*

The nation has a clearly historical dimension.⁷ Its culture is a result of a certain historical experience. A tradition is shaped within the history of the nation and it consists of efforts of the whole community in the realisation of its aims. Thus, the culture of a nation is shaped in the process of historical experiences and transformations. A nation is a community of people who carry in themselves a certain historical heritage. It is, in other words, the community of origin which grows from a common stem.⁸ Cardinal Wyszyński also emphasised the vital importance of history and historical awareness in the life of a nation. He reminded Polish people that history should be valued and passed on to next generations. In the veins of children and young people flows the blood of their ancestors. Polish people should bow with reverence to the history of their nation and the history of the Church so that they will never be forgotten.⁹

The Primate of Poland noticed an urgent need to develop historical education. The young generation should be brought up in the spirit of respect for the history of their homeland. The nation cannot lose its links with the past. If it was deprived of its historical consciousness, it could easily become a nation without the future. The history of Poland is difficult and marked with martyrdom, suffering, and hardship but it cannot be renounced.¹⁰ The young generation that will build the earthly life of the nation in the future should be aware of the fact that the land where it lives is marked with toil and work of those who fought for its existence. Their suffering and sacrifice make us believe that we have a special right to our native land.¹¹ The young generation

⁷ Cf. Jerzy LEWANDOWSKI, *Naród w nauczaniu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, Warszawa, 1989, 19.

⁸ Cf. Wiesław ŁUŻYŃSKI, *Struktury pośrednie pomiędzy jednostką ludzką a państwem w nauczaniu społecznym Kościoła*, 393; Jan CELEJ, *Kultura chrześcijańska duszą narodu w nauczaniu Prymasa Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, 166.

⁹ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, The speech on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the Cathedral of Bogoria Skotnicki (1370–1970), 15th November 1970, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, Warsaw, 1998, 171; Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the beatification of Bl. Vincentius Kadłubek in Jędrzejów, 30th August 1964, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 48; Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Polish church organization on Western Territories, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 81; Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of raising the collegiate church in Kruszwica to the rank of Minor Basilica 18th September 1970, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 160.

¹⁰ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of raising the collegiate church in Kruszwica to the rank of Minor Basilica 18th September 1970, 160.

¹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 161.

should be presented with a pure spirituality of the nation and its exceptional culture.¹² They should settle in and fall in love with the history of their nation so that they are proud of it and rooted in the national community, while being able to defend it and driven by the will to survive. The contemporary world is fed on the achievements of the past. A nation that forgets its own history is a tragic nation. A noble nation preserves its own history, believes in its creative strength, is enlivened, and constantly inspired by what constituted its spiritual, material, political and cultural power in the past.¹³

The Primate recalls the figure of Bl. Vincentius Kadlubek – a bishop and Cistercian monk whom he described as the first historian of Poland. Blessed Vincentius died in 1223 in Jędrzejów. He left behind many writings, *The Chronicles of Poland* in particular, and his life may serve as an example of sanctity. This 12th century chronicler became a model of a holy man for Polish people. In a way, he introduced his nation into the 13th century which was the century of saints in Poland. Other outstanding figures and saints of that time are Jacek and Jadwiga as well as blessed Czesław, Salomea, Bronisława, Kinga, and Jolanta. This glorious past has a great significance for the present. In the Church, we celebrate their feasts and cherish their names. In this way, the saints of the 13th century live among us. Like them, we originate from the same historical stem.¹⁴ Writing his *Chronicles of Poland*, Blessed Vincentius gathered facts which are important for Poland of the 12th and 13th centuries. This was his most significant work. Cardinal Wyszyński calls it a »great Catholic and national pedagogy«. While presenting the history of the nation, he taught how to cast aside selfishness, egoism, and self-interest. He called for love of the nation, concern for the public good, and the effort to shape virtue in oneself. His *Chronicles* are a great book of love for the country.¹⁵

The history of the Church and nation are so closely linked with each other that the national culture is Christian, Latin and Western. The defence of

¹² Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of closing the 3rd Week of Christian Culture, 30th April 1977, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 276.

¹³ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of raising the collegiate church in Krużewica to the rank of Minor Basilica, 18th September 1970, 161; Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the second burial of King Kazimierz Jagiellończyk (Casimir IV Jagiellon) and Queen Elizabeth, 18th October 1973, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 212–214; Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Stanisław Konarski's death, 21st April 1974, Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 224.

¹⁴ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the beatification of Bl. Vincentius Kadlubek in Jędrzejów, 30th August 1964, 48.

¹⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 49–51.

this culture was considered by Cardinal Wyszyński to be the most important task and objective.¹⁶

2.2. *The »Baptised Nation«*

Referring to the history of the nation, Cardinal Wyszyński indicated the importance of the baptism of the first historical ruler of Poland in 996. The Primate frequently spoke of Polish people as the baptised nation,¹⁷ Christian nation,¹⁸ Catholic nation,¹⁹ or the believing nation.²⁰ The Baptism of Mieszko I has a historical significance for the Polish people insofar as it initiated the Polish statehood and long and complex process of shaping culture and Polish identity. Christianity and the life of the Church were the foundations of these processes.

The link between culture, Polish history, and Christianity is unbreakable. The history of the Church and Christianity in Poland is identical with the history of the nation. The celebrations of the Millennium of the Baptism of Poland were simultaneously the celebrations of one thousand years of Polish statehood. Wyszyński spoke simply of the »religious culture of the nation«²¹. The baptism incorporated Polish people into the Mystical Body of Christ.²² By receiving the baptism by Mieszko I Poland was introduced into the family of Christian nations of Europe. With the baptism, the culture, institutions of public life, as well as all signs of social life were permeated with supernatural powers. Cardinal Wyszyński emphasized the contribution of Christianity to

¹⁶ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of raising the collegiate church in Kruszwica to the rank of Minor Basilica, 18th September 1970, 158–159; Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of closing the 3rd Week of Christian Culture, 30th April 1977, 276.

¹⁷ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily ending the National Pilgrimage of Writers and Authors to Jasna Góra 4th May 1958, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 20; Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the celebration of Millennium in Warsaw, 24th June 1966, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 92; Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Speech on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the baroque polychrome in the church in Żerków, 1st September 1968, Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 133–134.

¹⁸ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the Cathedral of Bogoria Skotnicki (1370–1970), 15th November 1970, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 172.

¹⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 172.

²⁰ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the celebrations of the Millennium in Wrocław, 15th October 1966, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 106.

²¹ Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the celebrations of the Millennium in Warsaw, 24th June 1966, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 93.

²² Cf. *Ibid.*

the national life. He interpreted theologically the presence of the Church in the history of Poland. By the power of grace the Church has strengthened spiritually natural bonds in the national community, the bonds which have been the result of various cultural, social and economic processes. The Church has united all the children of the nation in the name of the Father who takes care of everyone and created a brotherly community in the name of the Son, who is our brother. The Holy Spirit is a giver of unity which is imparted to the whole community. From the moment of baptism the Church has enriched with supernatural grace the bonds uniting the nation. It also ennobles the spiritual attributes, the richness of the Polish soul, intellectual achievements, the sensitivity of heart, and historical experiences in which the whole community takes part. The Church has been present in the history of the nation, strengthening the faith and will with grace and elevating love to the heights of the selfless gift of oneself. The spiritual unity of the Church has served the unity and strengthening of the supernatural, social, political, and even economic bonds.²³

The baptism initiated the process of building the national community. The Church supported this process with supernatural powers. It united spiritually, educated, shaped cultural identity of various tribes which were part of the state of the first Piasts. In the whole community the same Gospel was preached and the same sacraments were ministered. The Church supported and permeated with her supernatural powers natural, social, and cultural processes based on gradual unification of different peoples who constituted the emerging nation and state.

The creation of the Church structures was accompanied by the organisation of secular structures. The establishment of ecclesial power was parallel with the creation of secular authorities. The Church supported the developing country by organising independent Church structures. On the lands belonging to the Polish state an independent Church metropolis was established. The independent Church structure strengthened political independence of the emerging state. Cardinal Wyszyński recalls the Congress of Gniezno that took place in the year 1000 and the meeting of Bolesław Chrobry with emperor Otto III. The first archbishopric was created on the Polish territory and it encompassed the dioceses of Gniezno, Wrocław, Cracow and Kołobrzeg. Several years later the diocese of Poznań was established. Poland gained its own independent Church organisation, its own archbishop, and bishops. Since then spiritual powers, social, national, and political energy were expressed in a

²³ Cf. *Ibid.*

manner typical of Christian culture. Within the borders of this metropolis the same Christian spirit was alive.²⁴ The independent Church structure strengthened political independence of the state.

The Church and Christianity played an important role in every stage of life and history of the nation. As it has been stated before, Christianity constituted the foundation of the emerging national identity. Later, during the period of feudal fragmentation, Church structures, bishops, and other clergymen supported the unity of the nation.²⁵ The Church was present and active in different districts and sustained this unity. A very special time during which the nation experienced support of the Church were the partitions of Poland. Church structures somehow replaced the non-existent state structures. Cardinal Wyszyński referred to this particularly difficult period of Polish history, stressing the fact that the Church maintained national unity. Parishes supported the community, whereas clergymen played the role of guides and spokesmen of the nation. The pastoral care of the Church in its spiritual dimension promoted national cohesiveness and enabled people to maintain high moral standards which later facilitated the political renewal. The Church acted as a faithful advocate of national rights and with her great spiritual power strengthened the identity of national community.²⁶ Thus, the nation deprived of the state found support in the Church and survived difficult years of partitions thanks to a true presence of the Church and her pastoral ministry.

During the experiences of the partitions and occupation, Christianity and the structures of the Catholic Church constituted the most important element of continuity and endurance of the Polish nation. Cardinal Wyszyński observed that »looking at the past ten centuries we have to state that the baptism received by Mieszko I on April 14th 966 was the outpouring of the spring which has flowed on the heads of Polish people who have been born since then... Thinking about it today, we can see that there is no more lasting continuity in the history of Poland than the continuity of the salvific spring of the baptismal water which all the time flows through Poland and on the heads,

²⁴ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the celebrations of the 20th anniversary in Wrocław, 31st August 1965, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 71.

²⁵ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the beatification of Bl. Vincentius Kadlubek in Jędrzejów, 30th August 1964, 53.

²⁶ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, The Letter of the Primate of Poland to Clergy and Faithful of the Archdiocese of Warsaw for the Consecration of St. John the Baptist Cathedral at the Feast of the Pentecost 1960, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 28.

hearts and souls of the Polish nation, from Mieszko I to the little boy or girl who have just been baptized in Płock during the millennial celebrations.²⁷ Cardinal Wyszyński prophetically stated that Christ living in the Church is the oldest citizen of Poland.²⁸ Thus Christianity has constituted the most important element of continuity in the national community. In the past there was no continuity of the statehood, its institutions, and structures; however, the continuity of Church life has remained. During partitions and occupation the life of the Church went on uninterrupted.

Cardinal Wyszyński frequently referred to the historical fact of the baptism of the first historical ruler of Poland. This event became the baptism of the entire nation. The celebrations of the millennium were the occasion for the mass commemoration during which the nation manifested its attachment to the Church and Christianity. The Primate emphasised that the millennial celebrations were the feast for every Pole. This great event has triggered a wave of memories for all baptised Poles.²⁹ Cardinal Wyszyński interpreted the history of the Polish nation from the perspective of the presence of Christianity in its culture and history. The baptism is a historic event in our nation and the history of the state, the nation, and its Christian culture had their beginning there.

Among numerous national experiences, and especially in the time of national defeats and misfortunes, the Church encouraged the spirit of the nation, awakened the will for life, and taught how to undertake sacrifice and overcome difficulties. Spiritual support of the Church was decisive for the survival of the nation in the most difficult periods in its history.³⁰ In the midst of hardships the nation found support and help in the Church. Thanks to this support the nation managed to survive the most challenging trials and even got strengthened spiritually.³¹ In those difficult periods of history the Church played a substitutive role for the nation. This role consisted of sustaining cultural sovereignty, fighting for respect of the rights, strengthening the spirit of the nation, awakening and sustaining hope, nurturing national identity, sup-

²⁷ Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the celebrations of the Millennium in Wrocław, 15th October 1966, 115.

²⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 116.

²⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 102–103.

³⁰ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of raising the church in Trzemeszno to the rank of Basilica, 19th May 1970, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 154–155.

³¹ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the Cathedral of Bogoria Skotnicki (1370–1970), 15th November 1970, 173.

porting aspirations to regain political independence, and directing towards the realisation of social justice.³²

2.3. *The Living Presence of the Church in the Life of the Nation*

The Primate has shown the significance of Christianity in the life of the nation. Its role is not limited to shaping the culture and identity of the nation throughout history. It was particularly important when Cardinal Wyszyński was the head of the Church in Poland but also nowadays, the Church is present in the life of the nation and contributes substantially to it. At the beginning of the 21st century Christianity inspires national culture and exerts influence on the life of community.

Anthropology is of central significance for social life, insofar as the concept of social life depends on the concept of human being. The Communist system of enslavement of the society was based on a reductionist vision of human being, reduced only to the material dimension and entirely subordinated to the collective.³³ In such a context Cardinal Wyszyński taught about the Christian vision of human being and his/her high dignity as a child of God. A baptised person should follow the »divine style« in their life. This style has influenced the shape of Christian life, the organisation of the Holy Church, and the culture of the nation in our country. All has been permeated with divine lights, beams and powers. This style has shaped the life of national community and should serve as an inspiration for the future.³⁴ Christianity brings into the life of earthly community the teaching about the high dignity of human being, created in the image and likeness of God, redeemed and destined to the eternal glory. In its teaching, the Church proclaims the equal dignity of each human being. In light of the Gospel each human being possesses the same personal dignity. Moreover, the basic principle, the foundation of Christianity, so to speak, is love. Relying on it, it is easier to defend human dignity, it is easier to find appropriate motivation for different activities and initiatives.

³² Cf. Józef KRUKOWSKI, *Zasada współdziałania pomiędzy państwem a Kościołem w ujęciu Prymasa Wyszyńskiego*, in: *Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński Prymas Tysiąclecia – Mąż Stanu*, 33; Wiesław CHRZANOWSKI, *Suwerenny naród w niesuwerennym państwie*, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 21.

³³ Cf. Janusz SZULIST, *Służba czy niewolnicze podporządkowanie. Postulęstwo obywatelskie w katolickiej nauce społecznej*, Pelplin, 2012, 83–84.

³⁴ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Homily on the occasion of the elevation of the sarcophagus of St. Adalbert in Gniezno Basilica, 23rd April 1960*, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 22–23.

The Gospel of Christ motivates one to love, be merciful, and show solidarity in various forms. Christianity provides a solid foundation for values which are appreciated by all human beings, such as freedom, human dignity and human rights. Each baptised person is a free child of God and is not a slave of anything or anybody. He/she is only subordinated to God as the Father.³⁵ Nowadays, humanistic values, in particular dignity and freedom of human being, can be defended only in the name of Christ. In the Incarnation the Son of God became a human being and Christianity gave foundations to such cherished values as freedom, equality and the dignity of a human person.³⁶

The Church gives the nation essential values for the life of the community. These universal values, such as justice, love, and peace have Christian roots and can be fully realised only in Christianity.³⁷ The Primate forcefully stated that the Church is not a rival but an ally;³⁸ it brings spiritual values to the life of the national community and acts as a servant of the nation whose wounds it wishes to cure and it inspires and refines the national soul. The Church promotes values which originate from the Gospel and it is a spiritual teacher of the nation.³⁹

Churches are a typical element of the landscape of our towns and villages and play a special role in building and strengthening the spiritual powers of the nation. Churches scattered all over the country testify to how the Church has contributed to the heritage of this land.⁴⁰ The significance of Christianity in the culture and Polish identity has been known to enemies and invaders of Poland. That is why, they consistently destroyed churches. The Primate stressed that it was worth learning from them and start appreciating

³⁵ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the celebrations of the Millennium in Warsaw, 24th June 1966, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 97–98.

³⁶ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Stanisław Konarski's death, 21st April 1974, 225.

³⁷ Cf. Czesław BARTNIK, *Chrześcijańska nauka o narodzie według Prymasa Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, Londyn, 1982, 18–19; Ryszard MICHAŁSKI, Uniwersalne wartości w nauczaniu Księdza Prymasa Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, in: Ryszard MICHAŁSKI (ed.), *Ksiądz Stefan Kardynał Wyszyński Prymas Polski w setną rocznicę urodzin*, Toruń, 2002, 12–13.

³⁸ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 20th anniversary in Wrocław, 31st August 1965, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 77.

³⁹ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Speech in the ruins of St. James' Church in Szczecin, 30th November 1957, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 8; Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the beatification of Bl. Vincentius Kadlubek in Jędrzejów, 30th August 1964, 54.

⁴⁰ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Speech in the ruins of St. James' Church in Szczecin, 30th November 1957, 8.

and noticing the role of faith in the life of the nation. Churches are the places of gathering of the congregation and have always played an important role in keeping the spirit of the nation alive; they have been the fortresses of the spirit, strengthening the nation.⁴¹ It is interesting why the invaders of Poland consistently destroyed churches and fought against Christianity. The purpose of these acts was to weaken or even break the nation apart. Cardinal Wyszyński emphasised that we should learn from enemies and cherish what they try to ruin. Thus, everything that constitutes the Christian identity of the nation requires respect and reverence.

Polish culture is both national and religious.⁴² Cardinal Wyszyński taught about the »Polish Catholic culture«⁴³. The Church is the »ferment of the world«. It is also the ferment of the national culture and its history. The seed of the Gospel is the leaven which inspires the growth and life of the nation.⁴⁴ By preaching the Gospel the Church introduces a refreshing and inspiring energy to the life of the national community in the area of religious, social, and artistic culture. The Church permeates earthly values with spiritual powers. It gives strength, will, love, and patience to people involved in building their country and it motivates them to a greater engagement.⁴⁵ The Church tries to form the human being so that everything we create in a material sense is used with dignity. Our cultural, political, and economic efforts must be permeated with the spiritual culture. They should be directed and inspired by a guiding thought. This is a spiritual contribution of the Church to the life of the nation. The stability of our achievements in different fields of social life

⁴¹ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, The Letter of the Primate of Poland to Clergy and Faithful of the Archdiocese of Warsaw for the Consecration of St. John the Baptist Cathedral at the Feast of the Pentecost 1960, 30; Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Primate's Council for the Rebuilding of destroyed Churches in Warsaw, 27th September 1972, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 204.

⁴² Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the baroque polychrome in the church in Żerków, 1st September 1968, 136.

⁴³ Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Speech on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of St. Adalbert Bookshop and Publishing House, 23rd April 1970, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 140.

⁴⁴ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the Jagiellonian University, Cracow, 5th September 1964, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 64; Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Polish church organization on Western Territories, 81.

⁴⁵ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, A Speech at the opening of the Millennium Exhibition in Warsaw. Warsaw, the cellars of the Church of the Holy Cross, 23rd June 1966, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 90; Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the celebrations of the Millennium in Wrocław, 15th October 1966, 105–106.

depends on the permeating of human activity with spiritual powers.⁴⁶ Cardinal Wyszyński emphasises the need for cooperation between the Church and state in building the prosperous future of our country.⁴⁷

Today the need for cooperation between the Church and nation is also important. A particular area of cooperation is the moral formation of the nation. The Church plays a crucial role in this respect as national morality cannot be placed in a void. It has to be based on religion and the faith in God. Practically speaking, it should be founded on pastoral care of the Church.⁴⁸ The development of education is a particular contribution of the Church to the national culture as the Church brings and preaches the Gospel. It has been present in the culture and history of nations creating schools and universities. Education and formation were also undertaken on Polish lands. The Primate reminds that in Poland the geography of Church administration, especially of parishes, overlaps with the geographic distribution of schools.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Pastoral ministry of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński was taking place during the years of communist dictatorship in Poland and the entire Central and Eastern Europe. Reacting to this particularly difficult situation for the Church and nation, Cardinal Wyszyński taught about the inextricable link between national culture and Christianity. He indicated the importance of the baptism for the past and identity of Polish people, emphasising the crucial role of Christianity in the history of the nation. He also spoke about the enormous formative contribution of the Church and Christianity in the contemporary life of national community. In his teaching, the emphasis on education and formation of young generation in the spirit of respect for the past of their country is extremely important. He recalled the saints who had exerted influence on

⁴⁶ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, A Speech at the opening of the Millennium Exhibition in Warsaw. Warsaw, the cellars of the Church of the Holy Cross, 23rd June 1966, 90; Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the celebrations of the Millennium in Wrocław, 15th October 1966, 105–106.

⁴⁷ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, From the History of the Millennial Nation. Płock, Cathedral, 12th November 1966, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 109.

⁴⁸ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, Homily on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Stanisław Konarski's death, 21st April 1974, 225; Zbigniew WANAT, *Sumienie w blasku prawdy*, Toruń, 2012, 286–291.

⁴⁹ Cf. Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, The Speech on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Friends of the Catholic University of Lublin Society, 18th April 1971, in: Stefan WYSZYŃSKI, *Reflections on the National Culture*, 185.

the life of national community. For Cardinal Wyszyński, the celebration of the Millennium was the feast of Christianity in the Polish nation and the feast of one thousand years of Polish nation.

Sažetak

**»POKRŠTENI NAROD« – NERAZDVOJIVOST KRŠĆANSTVA I
KULTURE POLJSKOG NARODA
PROMIŠLJANJA NA TEMELJU UČENJA KARDINALA STEFANA
WYSZYŃSKOG**

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Nacija je kulturna zajednica a kultura određuje kako će život u zajednici izgledati. Kršćanstvo je konstitutivan element poljske nacionalne kulture. U svojim učenjima kardinal Stefan Wyszyński, koji je predsjedao poljskom Crkvom tijekom razdoblja vladavine ateističkog sustava komunizma, naglašava prisutnost kršćanstva u povijesti poljskog naroda. Kardinal je držao da prošlost, prožetu prisutnošću Crkve i kršćanstva, valja predstaviti mladim ljudima kako bi zadobili osjećaj kontinuiteta i usidrenosti, te kako bi postali svjesni vlastite povijesti i sposobni gledati u budućnost. Kardinal Wyszyński je često rabio izraz »pokrštena nacija« i tako naglašavao važnu ulogu krštenja u povijesti poljskog naroda. Svojim je duhovnim vrijednostima religija prožela napore ljudi u društvenoj, kulturnoj, političkoj i ekonomskoj sferi. U teškim trenucima poljske povijesti krštenje i drugi sakramenti, kao i Kristovo evanđelje, odigrali su ključnu ulogu u održavanju kontinuiteta nacije. Tijekom razdoblja podijeljenosti u Poljskoj, crkvene su strukture zamijenile nepostojeće državne institucije. U današnje vrijeme Crkva također nadahnjuje život zajednice svjetlom evanđelja te se uglavnom stavlja u službu zaštite i promicanja dostojanstva ljudske osobe. Prema tome, kršćanstvo je konstitutivan element poljske kulture.

Ključne riječi: nacija, krštenje, kardinal Stefan Wyszyński, kultura, kršćanstvo.